

STATE SENATOR  
**BRUCE PATTERSON**  
IN THE LOOP ★

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02/17/06

→ PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO A FRIEND!

**\*\* Sen. Patterson to host Education Committee in District \*\***

On Monday, February 27, Sen. Patterson will host Chairman Wayne Kuipers and the Senate Education Committee at a special public hearing in Brownstown. The proposed graduation requirements will be the topic.

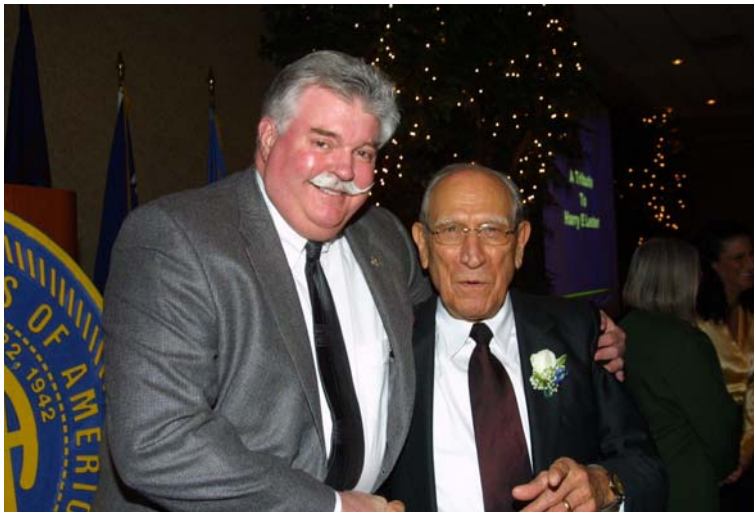
The meeting will open at 5:30pm, at Brownstown Middle School, 20135 Inkster Road, between Sibley & King. District residents including parents and students, teachers, school board members, superintendents, will address the Committee. You are welcome to address the Committee also. Contact Mr. Chris Gillett at (517) 373-7350, please.

**Patterson bill to free money for family college funds**

Senator Patterson introduced SB 1048 this week to correct a glitch in current law, to help families save for their children's college education. The Michigan Education Savings Plan [MESP] allows \$5,000 annual donations, tax-free, on a single return, or \$10G on a joint return, to build up a child's account. The glitch is that, when the first child starts college, withdrawals are subtracted from the allowable deduction, which hurts the funds of younger children. Lower and middle income families are especially penalized by this injustice. Steve Braun of Canton, a financial planner, brought this to the attention of the Treasury Department, who were unable to fix the matter; so he took it to Sen. Patterson. Now "the fix is on the way!" A good number of senators have signed on as co-sponsors.

**Harry E. Lester honored at retirement dinner**

Harry Lester is retiring as District Two Director of the United Steelworkers of America, after 53 years of service. Senator Patterson presented a Tribute signed by himself and Sen. Mike Prusi, Co-Chairmen of the legislature's bi-partisan Steel and Mining Caucus, *et al.* Lester has served the state under governors of both parties. He and his wife, Mary, also established a scholarship fund for Steelworkers' children to advance their college education opportunities. He also founded the Downriver Prayer Breakfast, which is always well-attended.



### **Help with heating bills**

Winter's bitter temperatures have returned, after a mild January. Everyone is feeling the squeeze, but you may specially know those who are unable to afford to pay their bills. Please share vital information. This website is for non-profit groups seeking to offer emergency help: <http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2energy.htm> . Programmable thermostats are also available free to some citizens. A free call to (800) 292-9555 can get information on how to contact the local community action agency about this.

### **Long-Range Energy Planning**

Sen. Patterson announced the formation of a workgroup to tackle the tough issues in a long-range plan for Michigan's energy resources. The group will hold its first meeting next Wednesday, February 22. Michigan has had no state plan in over twenty years. Sen. Patterson has urged state agencies to act on this since before the Great Blackout of August 2003, without response. So he is proceeding as Chairman of the Technology & Energy Committee to gather experts across the spectrum to identify solutions and draft policy legislation. "Homes and jobs cannot be put at risk by failure to plan ahead for the long term," he said.

### **Belleville: Breakfast with Bruce, February 27**

A complimentary breakfast for Seniors will be offered at the Van Buren Township's 'September Days Senior Center' on Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, from 9 to 10:30am, in the Otisville-Sheldon Room. RSVPs are requested.

The Senior Center is located at 46425 Tyler Road, in Belleville (between Belleville and Beck Roads). Please call Sarah to RSVP, (734) 699-8918.

Guest Speakers will include Joan Rich, from the Traffic Improvement Association (a non-profit group). She will talk on useful tips for senior drivers. Sgt. Yono and Officer Harrison, of the Van Buren Township Police Department, will also speak about safety and driving issues in Van Buren Township. Senator Patterson will speak about issues of interest to seniors.

### **Water protection bills go to the Governor**

Five groundwater protection bills have been sent to the Governor to be signed. They establish control of pumping operations and withdrawals to prevent damage to the environment. In the package is Sen. Patterson's SB 851, which adds new duties to the Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council, so future legislatures (in an era of term limits) can be properly updated by a scientific body before problems can get out of hand.

Sen. Patterson was singled out as a catalyst in the outcome of the final bills. He said, "This was really a labor of love for me. There will be no water diversions from our lakes or streams without legislative oversight. Fishing streams will be protected. Water bottlers must have permits, and abide by them. Businesses using water must state their conservation measures. Good policy can only be based on sound science. These bills will do that." The bills has wide bi-partisan support for final passage.

### **Senate encouraging land preservation**

Legislation to help promote land preservation has been introduced in the Senate. Senate Bill 1038 provides a credit for land that is put in a conservation easement equal to 50 percent of the state equalized value of the land. The legislation is part of a three-bill package to encourage land conservation in the state.

The other bills are Senate Bill 317 and SB 1004. SB 317 would provide a similar credit as provided in SB 1038 to individuals through an income tax credit. SB 1004 removes the "pop-up" tax from the lands that are enrolled in qualified conservation easements, however any residences or buildings would still be subject to the "pop-up" tax.

The plan addresses the key challenges faced by land conservation. Many of the parcels that individuals are looking to conserve are sought after properties and can carry a substantial market value, making it difficult to afford the potential "pop-up" on the land, in addition to the opportunity cost of putting it into a conservation easement.

### **Michigan Tax Forms, help, &c., found on line, and locally:**

<http://michigan.gov/treasury/> And Sen. Patterson's District Representative, Sue Trussell, will deliver Tax Guides to city and town halls, libraries, and community centers within the next week. One can also be mailed from this office. Please see contact info below.

### **Register numbers to protect your children**

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) announced that parents and others may now register instant messenger IDs, mobile text messaging and fax numbers to which minors have access on Michigan's Protect MI Child registry.

People have been able to register e-mail addresses to which minors have access since July 1 last year. The registry is designed to help parents and others guard children from inappropriate messages.

"Parents, schools, and others can now register additional contact points' to prevent unwanted and inappropriate messages from reaching children in Michigan"; said MPSC Chairman J. Peter Lark. "The registry is an easy-to-use tool to reduce the number of these types of messages."

The Michigan Children's Protection Registry Act (Public Act 241) prohibits sending to registered contact points messages about products or services that are legally prohibited for children; for example, pornography, tobacco, gambling, alcohol, or illegal drugs. Senders of prohibited messages are required to remove registered contact points from their electronic mailing lists within 30 days.

If a registered contact point receives a prohibited message, a complaint may be filed with the Michigan Attorney General's office. A first violation is a misdemeanor; subsequent violations are felonies. Civil penalties may also be sought.

Contact points may be registered by visiting the Protect MI Child Web site: michigan.gov/protectmichild (or <https://www.protectmichild.com/> ).

### **Continuing the fight against meth**

The fight against methamphetamine continues as lawmakers announced a new package of bills to help combat the dangerous drug and halt its spread across the state. The package focuses on protecting children from meth and cleaning up hazardous waste sites. The legislation would:

- Require the Department of Human Services to partner with local authorities when a child has been exposed to meth;
- Require DHS to refer child abuse cases that include a child's exposure to meth to a prosecuting attorney;
- Allow criminal convictions involving substance abuse, including meth, to be considered in child custody cases and clarify that suspicion of meth exposure is a symptom of child abuse that requires reporting;
- Establish statewide criteria that every community must follow for a home or other meth production site to be considered clean and ready for occupancy;
- Allow longer probationary periods for those convicted of a meth crime;
- Encourage the Michigan Department of Education and school districts to educate teachers, administrators and students on the signs and dangers of meth use and production; and
- Continue to make buying large quantities of pseudoephedrine more difficult by restricting internet purchases.

### **Office Hours schedule for February, 2006**

On **Tuesdays** of each week, Sue Trussell, Sen. Patterson's District Representative, will hold office hours from 11:00am to 1:00pm at the following places:

February 21<sup>st</sup> Canton Library, 1200 South Canton Center Road  
 February 28<sup>th</sup> Grosse Île – Mochavation Café, 8537 Macomb Street  
 March 7<sup>th</sup> Sumpter Township Hall  
 March 14<sup>th</sup> Woodhaven City Hall

### **Contact Information**

Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail, please contact my office at < [senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov) >. You can also visit me in my Lansing office at 505 Farnum Building, just across S. Capitol Avenue from the state Capitol; or you can send me mail at P. O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909. Telephone (517) 373-7350 or (866) 262-7307; fax (517) 373-9228. I want to hear from you.

See the *Legislative Questionnaire* on the Website, too! Your responses are welcomed!